

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 AGR-05 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00

FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 L-02 /050 W

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R 241400Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3677

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIN MR

SUBJECT: LANG-PRITCHARD SUGAR REFINERY

1. FIVE-MAN DELEGATION FROM PRITCHARD LED BY EXECUTIVE VP OLIPHANT DEPARTED NOUAKCHOTT APRIL 21 FOLLOWING WEEK-LONG SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS WITH GIRM. PRITCHARD REPS WERE RETURNING DIRECT TO WASHINGTON WHERE THEY EXPECT TO MEET WITH EXPORT-IMPORT BANK OFFICIALS. EMBOFF URGED THEM TO CONTACT AF/W AS WELL.

2. MAJOR PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED DURING DISCUSSIONS RELATED TO GIRM INSISTENCE ON FIXED-COST FIGURE FOR BOTH OVERSEAS AND LOCAL COSTS. PRITCHARD INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT FIXED-COST ARRANGEMENT FOR OVERSEAS EXPENSES BUT NBF RELUCTANT TO DO SO FOR LOCAL COSTS. AT CONCLUSION OF TALKS, OLIPHANT THOUGHT TWO SIDES WERE CLOSE TO AGREEMENT. PRITCHARD LEFT WRITTEN PROPOSAL SUGGESTING SEVERAL CALCULATIONAL FORMULAS WITH GIRM AND IS AWAITING WRITTEN RESPONSE FROM MINISTER OF PLAN AND INDUSTRIALIZATION. OLIPHANT WAS OPTIMISTIC UPON DEPARTURE THAT GIRM AND PRITCHARD WILL AGREE ON TERMS. OLIPHANT GAVE "CATEGORICAL PERSONAL ASSURANCES" TO AMBASSADOR THAT REFINERY WILL GO FORWARD.

MINISTER OF PLAN AND INDUSTRIALIZATION, IN SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR, ALSO INDICATED SATISFACTION

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WITH DISCUSSIONS AND EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT AGREEMENT

WILL BE REACHED.

3. PRITCHARD REPS HAD IMPRESSION THAT GIRM WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS POSED BY EXPORT-IMPORT BANK UNTIL AFTER NEXT PRITCHARD-GIRM MEETING IN NOUAKCHOTT TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR MAY 27. (EMBASSY WILL ATTEMPT TO ASCERTAIN GIRM PROGRESS IN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS.)

4. FOR ITS PART, PRITCHARD LEFT NOUAKCHOTT CONVINCED THAT IT MUST SHOW SOME DRAMATIC PROGRESS ON THE GROUND. UP TO PRESENT TIME, ONLY VISIBLE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN LEVELING OFF OF SAND DUNE. PRITCHARD SAYS IT WILL MAKE STRONG EFFORT IN COMING FOUR WEEKS TO HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW MINISTER ABDALLAHI DURING COURSE OF MAY MEETINGS. REFLECTING ON QUESTIONS PUT TO EMBOFFS RE AVAILABLE MEDICAL CARE, SCHOOLING, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, ETC., IN ADDITION TO GENERAL EXCHANGES ON STATUS OF PROJECT, EMBOFFS CONCLUDED PRITCHARD REPS WHO VISITED NOUAKCHOTT HAVE EVERY INTENTION OF PUSHING AHEAD RAPIDLY. OLIPHANT INDICATED THERE WILL BE APPROXIMATELY 70 EXPATRIATE STAFF IN NOUAKCHOTT AT PEAK OF ACTIVITY, ALTHOUGH ONLY 4 TO 5 EMPLOYEES ARE EXPECTED TO BRING FAMILIES.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY BELIEVES MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION HAS FINALLY TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN AMERICAN CONTRACTOR AND GIRM. SIGNIFICANT DEGREE OF MUTUAL TRUST AND CONFIDENCE APPARENTLY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BETWEEN TWO PARTIES AS RESULT OF WEEK-LONGSERIES OF TALKS. AT SAME TIME, LANG-PRITCHARD REPS NOW SEEM TO APPRECIATE VERY REAL DIFFICULTIES FACING AMERICAN FIRMS OPERATING IN MAURITANIA.

HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SUGAR, REFINERIES, LOANS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975NOUAKC00772
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750147-0308
From: NOUAKCHOTT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750421/aaaaasyp.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 AUG 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <15 DEC 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LANG-PRITCHARD SUGAR REFINERY
TAGS: EFIN, MR, LANG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006